

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NASA-01 SNM-05
DEAE-00 HA-05 CEA-01 STR-07 SAB-02 OES-07 DOE-15
SOE-02 /135 W

-----042204 301722Z /45

R 301423Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9902

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PPDC, EHRG (MELGAR CASTRO, JUAN ALBERTO), HO
SUBJ: DELIVERY OF REPLY TO CHIEF OF STATE'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT
CARTER

REF: STATE 070757

1. SUMMARY: THE AMBASSADOR CALLED ON THE CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR MARCH 28 TO DELIVER A RESPONSE TO MELGAR'S LETTER OF JANUARY 24 TO PRESIDENT CARTER. THE LETTER REFERRED TO THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE BORDER DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR, THE EL CAJON HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT, U.S. ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS UNDER THE REMOTE SENSING PROGRAM, AND MRS. MELGAR'S PARTICIPATION IN THE THIRD US-CENTRAL AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN NEW ORLEANS LAST MONTH. OTHER SUBJECTS DISCUSSED WERE THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, U.S. ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS TO CONTROL NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, A U.S. COMPANY'S PARTICIPATION IN BIDDING FOR A \$50 MILLION CEMENT PLANT, THE FORTHCOMING SIGNING OF A RURAL ELECTRIFICATION LOAN TO HONDURAS, AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO VENEZUELA AND BRAZIL, END SUMMARY.

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2. THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DCM, CALLED ON CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR MARCH 28 TO DELIVER THE LETTER SHE SIGNED IN RESPONSE TO MELGAR'S LETTER OF JANUARY 24 TO PRESIDENT CARTER. SHE REVIEWED THE TOPICS DISCUSSED IN THE LETTER AND EXPLAINED WHY SHE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO RESPOND IN THE PRESIDENT'S BEHALF, ADDING THAT THIS DOES NOT INDICATED ANY DIMINUTION IN THE PRESIDENT'S INTEREST IN THE EL CAJON HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT, THE

REMOTE SENSING PROGRAM, OR SETTLEMENT OF THE BORDER DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR.

3. MELGAR EXPRESSED HIS GREAT APPRECIATION IN RECEIVING THE LETTER AND RECALLED THAT HE HAD RAISED ONLY TWO TOPICS WITH THE PRESIDENT DURING THEIR BILATERAL LAST SEPTEMBER: EL CAJON AND THE BORDER DISPUTE. HE SAID HE WAS GRATIFIED BY THE PRESIDENT'S FORTHCOMING AND CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE ON THESE TWO SUBJECTS, AND GRATEFUL FOR THE PRESIDENT'S OFFER OF U.S. ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE REMOTE SENSING PROGRAM. MELGAR EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE REMARKS CONTAINED IN THE LETTER (AND REITERATED BY THE AMBASSADOR ORALLY) CONCERNING MRS. MELGAR'S PARTICIPATION IN THE THIRD US-CENTRAL AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ORLEANS LAST MONTH. HE ALSO THANKED THE AMBASSADOR FOR BEING SO HELPFUL TO HIS WIFE IN NEW ORLEANS.

4. THE AMBASSADOR REFERRED TO THE RECENT U.S. SENATE APPROVAL OF THE FIRST OF TWO PANAMA CANAL TREATIES, NOTING THAT THE FACT THAT THE TREATY WAS APPROVED BY ONLY A ONE-VOTE MARGIN ILLUSTRATED NOT ONLY THE HARD FIGHT THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD HAD TO WAGE TO GAIN THIS INITIAL VICTORY, BUT THE REMAINING WORK THAT HAS TO BE DONE TO WIN APPROVAL OF THE SECOND TREATY. MELGAR RESPONDED THAT HE IS AWARE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR THE TREATIES, ADDING THAT HE BELIEVES THE PRESIDENT IS MANAGING THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS VERY WELL AND THAT HE WISHED HIM SUCCESS.

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5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM THE AMBASSADOR, MELGAR SAID HE IS AWARE THAT A NASA TEAM HAS ARRIVED IN HONDURAS AND IS DISCUSSING THE REMOTE SENSING PROGRAM WITH VARIOUS MINISTRIES.

6. THE AMBASSADOR REFERRED TO THE EMERGING CONSENSUS IN THE UNITED NATIONS ON A BROADER AND DEEPER DEFINITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, POINTING OUT THAT NOT ONLY THE US AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS BUT A VARIETY OF OTHER NATIONS WITH DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES ARE PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROCESS. MELGAR REPLIED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD BE PLEASED BY THE SUPPORT HE HAS RECEIVED FOR HIS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. HE ADDED THAT OCCASIONALLY HONDURAS FEELS APART, BECAUSE OF ITS RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AS CONTRASTED WITH THE POLICIES OF MANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS. ALL HONDURANS, INCLUDING THE MILITARY, SUPPORT THIS POLICY, MELGAR SAID, AND INCREASED SUPPORT ON THE PART OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR HONDURAS TO MAINTAIN ITS CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY.

7. THE AMBASSADOR INFORMED MELGAR THAT SHE HAD RECEIVED INFORMAL WORD FROM WASHINGTON THAT APPROVAL MAY BE FORTHCOMING FOR A \$50,000 PROJECT TO ASSIST IN NARCOTICS CONTROL IN HONDURAS.

SHE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT NOTHING HAD YET BEEN RECEIVED IN WRITING TO CONFIRM THIS, AND THAT THEREFORE NO COMMITMENT OF ANY KIND COULD BE MADE.

8. THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT AMONG THE EIGHT FIRMS THAT BID ON THE \$50 MILLION PROJECT FOR THE PIEDRAS AZULES CEMENT PLANT IS ONE FIRM (ALLIS-CHALMERS) WHICH IS COLLABORATING WITH A SPANISH FIRM. SHE SAID THAT THE US-SPANISH COMBINATION HAD SUBMITTED THE LOWEST TURNKEY BID ON THE PROJECT, ADDING THAT THE U.S. FIRM'S ROLE IS LIMITED TO PROVIDING TECHNICAL ADVICE AND ENGINEERING DESIGN OF EQUIPMENT. THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT THE FACT THAT THE U.S. COMPANY IS A MINOR PARTNER IN THE PROJECT IS AN INDICATION THAT ADDITIONAL SMALL U.S. FIRMS MAY BECOME INTERESTED IN OTHER BUSINESS AND INVESTMENTS IN HONDURAS. THE AMBASSADOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SADOR SUGGESTED THAT THE EMBASSY'S ECONOMIC OFFICER FOLLOW UP THIS WITH THE CHIEF OF STATE'S ADVISER CESAR BATRES, AND MELGAR READILY ASSENTED.

9. THE AMBASSADOR SAID SHE HOPED THAT THE RURAL ELECTRIFICATION LOAN COULD BE SIGNED LATER THIS WEEK, MELGAR GREETED THIS NEWS WITH CONSIDERABLE ENTHUSIASM AND SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THE AGUAN VALLEY.

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9903

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10. AS THE AMBASSADOR WAS ABOUT TO DEPART, MELGAR REFERRED TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S CURRENT VISIT TO VENEZUELA AND BRAZIL, DECLARING THAT HE BELIEVES A VISIT TO THESE TWO NATIONS IS AN APPROPRIATE AND COMMENDABLE INITIATIVE ON THE PART OF THE PRESIDENT.

11. AS USUAL, MELGAR WAS CORDIAL, ENTHUSIASTIC AND ANIMATED, EXPRESSING A LIVELY INTEREST AND A SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE ON ALL OF THE SUBJECTS RAISED. HIS ADMIRATION AND RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT CARTER, WHICH WAS NURTURED BY HIS MEETING WITH HIM IN WASHINGTON LAST SEPTEMBER, WAS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION.
JARAMILLO

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